



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Utah Resident contracts Probable West Nile Infection Outside of State

(Salt Lake City, UT) – On August 29, the first probable case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in a Utah resident was identified, however, all evidence indicates that the individual was infected while traveling outside of Utah in a state that is known to have WNV transmission. The patient, who has since recovered, had traveled to an eastern state for a period of several weeks in July and began to feel ill shortly before returning to Utah. An observant Utah physician who saw the patient asked about recent travel and sent specimens for WNV testing. Based on the case definition of a WNV infection used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this is currently classified as probable. However, it is very likely to be confirmed as a WNV infection.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) stresses that this case does not indicate that WNV is being spread in Utah. To date, there is no evidence that any humans, animals, or mosquitoes have acquired the virus while in Utah. The virus is not spread from person-to-person so there is no risk of this patient having spread the illness to others in Utah. However, WNV has now been identified in the states bordering Utah to the east. Intensive surveillance efforts continue to look for the virus here in Utah, and UDOH recommends that people take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

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Steps people can take to protect themselves from mosquito bites include:

- Reduce time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most likely to be biting - at dusk and dawn.
- Make sure screen doors and window screens are in good condition. Small holes are large enough to allow mosquitoes to enter.

If you must be outside while mosquitoes are active:

- Wear light-colored, long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Apply mosquito repellent (repellents that contain DEET are the most effective; read the instructions on the label on all products before using them and be especially careful when using repellents on children and infants).

Around your home and property, eliminate places for mosquitoes to reproduce:

- Eliminate standing water sources around housing areas (i.e., water in old tires, cans, poorly kept swimming pools, toys, wheelbarrows, etc.).
- Water that is kept outside for a reason (e.g., pet water dishes, birdbaths, etc.) needs to be changed at least once every 2-3 days.
- Clean rain gutters at least once a year.
- Aerate ornamental ponds and/or stock them with mosquito-eating fish (*Gambusia affinis*). Contact your local mosquito abatement district to ask about these fish.
- Maintain swimming pools or drain them.

The signs and symptoms of West Nile Virus infection in people include fever, headache, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. Most people infected with the West Nile Virus will have a mild form of this illness that lasts for a few days and goes away on its own. Less than 1% of people infected with the West Nile Virus develop a more severe form of the illness. People over the age of 50 are at highest risk for this more severe illness. People with the more severe form of the illness will have more pronounced signs and symptoms, including confusion, weakness, and other signs of nervous system disease. There is no specific treatment for West Nile Virus and there is currently no vaccine to prevent the illness in humans.

The UDOH and local health departments have information about WNV for the general public and clinical information for health care providers. Anyone who is concerned about their personal health is encouraged to speak with their health care provider.

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